

he never possessed any skill, never did he
 achieve enough
 even to drive in a nail with accuracy or
 assurance, or
 to mend a bicycle puncture His schooling
 pursued the
 normal course, and included Sunday school
 There, as
 in the ordinary school, he won rows of prizes,
 many years
 later, his secretary, rather to his surprise,
 found that he
 had, for these volumes—Christy's Old Organ
 and the like—
 a queer tenderness The books at 41,
 Grosvenor Road
 were having their annual dusting, when the
 bottom shelves
 were emptied, and their contents exposed,
 various such
 works were disclosed "Get rid of them," said
 Mrs Webb,
 with ruthless common-sense Sidney
 demurred "I don't
 think we will," he murmured, and in the end,
 retrieved
 them all, and stowed them—perhaps for
 greater safety—
 behind other volumes

School days at the City of London school
 came, all
 too early, to an end Classes at the Birkbeck
 Institute
 had to be broken by a change for the worse in
 the family
 circumstances, at sixteen, it was necessary for
 Sidney to
 become a wage-earner Assisted by his
 knowledge of
 French and German, he got a post as a clerk
 in the City
 office of a Colonial broker There, however,
 he did not
 stay for long Assiduously, he went on with
 his studies
 His gift for rapid reading and secure
 assimilation and
 memorisation of whatever he read that
 interested him—
 and nearly everything did—stood him in
 good stead
 He attended London University evening
 classes, after

working hours were over, and, in 1878, sat for the Open Competitive Examination for the Civil Service. As a result, he won a place in the War Office, as what was then known as a Second Division clerk. His examination efficiency was formidable. Not only did he invariably come out at the top he literally 'mopped up'⁵ exhibitions, scholarships and prizes. A year later, he again sat for examination, and was again successful,, being transferred